Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

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Listing of Claims:

1. (Previously Presented) A ceramic packing element an essentially uniform cross-section along an axis passing through a center of the element and about which the element is symmetrical defining a length of the element a ratio of a
10 width dimension to the length being from 1.5:1 to 5:1, and first and second concave external surfaces at the ends of height and width axes respectively perpendicular to the length direction, said concave surfaces being connected by surfaces that are selected from convex surfaces and convex surfaces connected to the concave surfaces by relatively short intermediate flat surfaces, and the
15 element being provided with at least three through passages in the length direction, at least one of the passageways being kidney bean-shaped in cross-section, the kidney-bean shaped passageway having two generally parallel arcuate surfaces.

20 2. (Previously Presented) An element according to claim 1 in which the concave surfaces are connected directly to convex surfaces.

3. (Previously Presented) An element according to Claim 1 or 2 in which width and height dimensions of the element are unequal with the ratio of width to
25 height being from 1.25:1 to 3:1.

4. (Previously Presented) An element according to Claim 3 in which width and height dimensions of the element are in a ratio of from about 1.3:1 to 2.0:1.

30 5. (Previously Presented) An element according to Claim 1 in which the element is provided with from 3 to 275 passageways.

6.   (Previously Presented) An element according to Claim 1 in which at least a plurality of the passageways are round in cross-section and a diameter of each round passage is less than about one half of the of the element.

5   7.   (Previously Presented) An element according to Claim 6 in which the plurality of passageways have identical dimensions.

8.   (Previously Presented) An element according to Claim 1 in which the at least one kidney bean-shaped passageway has a largest dimension which is up

10   to about 2/3 of the height of the element.

9.   (Previously Presented) An element according to Claim 1 in which a total cross-sectional area of the passages represents from 20 to 75% of the total cross-sectional area of the element.

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10.   (Previously Presented) An element according to Claim 9 in which a total cross-sectional area of the passages represents from 30 to 67% of the total cross-sectional area of the element.

20   11.   (Previously Presented) An element according to Claim 1 in which the ceramic is a porous material.

12.   (Previously Presented) An element according to Claim 1 in which the passages include a plurality of second passages having a second shape, the at

25   least one kidney bean-shaped passage being positioned intermediate at least one of the plurality of second of passages and the center of the element.

13.   (Previously Presented) An element according to Claim 1 in which a ratio of height to width of the element, H:L is from about 5:1 to 15:1.

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14.   (Currently Amended) An element ~~according~~ according to Claim 13 in which H:L is about 8:1.

15.   (Currently Amended) A method of forming a bed of packing elements comprising:

extruding a mixture comprising one or more ceramic-forming components;

5   sectioning the extruded mixture to form sections;

firing the sections to form packing elements, wherein each of the packing elements is characterized by first and second concave external surfaces at the ends of height and width axes respectively perpendicular to a length direction, said concave surfaces being connected by surfaces that are selected

10   from convex surfaces and convex surfaces connected to the concave surfaces by relatively short intermediate flat surfaces (7), a ratio of a width dimension to the length being from 1.5:1 to 5:1, and the element being provided with at least three through passages in the length direction, at least one of the passageways being kidney bean-shaped in cross-section, the kidney-bean shaped

15   passageway having two generally parallel arcuate surfaces;

assembling a bed of packing elements which includes a plurality of the fired packing elements.

16.   (Previously Presented) An element according to Claim 1, wherein the

20   kidney bean-shaped passageway includes a pair of kidney bean-shaped passages.

17.   (Previously Presented) A ceramic packing element having an essentially uniform cross-section along an axis defining a length of the element, the element

25   including first and second opposed concave surfaces at ends of a height axis and third and fourth opposed concave surfaces at ends of a width axis, the element having a width greater than a height;

a plurality of first passages extending through the element in the length direction;

30   at least one second passage extending through the element in the length direction, the second passage having a shape different from the first passage, the second passage comprising first and second generally parallel surfaces and a height greater than a width.

18. (Previously Presented) A ceramic packing element according to Claim 17, wherein one of the first passages is intermediate two second passages.

5   19. (Previously Presented) A ceramic packing element according to claim 18, wherein the at least one second passage extends generally parallel with the length direction.

20. (New) A ceramic bed limiter packing element having an essentially

10   uniform cross-section along an axis passing through the center of the element and about which the element is symmetrical defining the length of the element and first and second pairs of concave external surfaces which extend along the length of the element at the intersections of height and width axes, the height and width axes being perpendicular to the length direction, said concave

15   surfaces being connected by surfaces that are selected from convex surfaces and convex surfaces connected to the concave surfaces by relatively short intermediate flat surfaces, and the element being provided with at least seven discrete through passages in the length direction, the through passages being disconnected from each other, wherein width and height dimensions of the

20   element are unequal.

21. (New) An element according to Claim 20 in which the total cross-sectional area of the passages represents from 20 to 75% of the total cross-sectional area of the element.

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22. (New) An element according to Claim 20 in which the ceramic is a porous material.

23. (New) A ceramic bed limiter packing element having an essentially

30   uniform cross-section along an axis passing through the center of the element and about which the element is symmetrical defining the length of the element and two opposed first concave external surfaces, and two opposed second concave external surfaces which extend along the length of the element at

opposed ends of height and width dimensions, respectively, the height and width dimensions being perpendicular to the length direction, said concave surfaces being connected by surfaces that are selected from convex surfaces and convex surfaces connected to the concave surfaces by relatively short intermediate flat surfaces, and the element being provided with at least ~~three~~ <u>seven</u> discrete through passages in the length direction, the through passages being disconnected from each other, in which the ratio of the width to the length is from 1.5:1 to 5:1.

24.   (New) An element according to claim 23 in which the concave surfaces are connected directly to convex surfaces.

25.   (New) An element according to Claim 23 in which the ratio of width to height is from 1.25:1 to 3:1.

26.   (New) An element according to Claim 25 in which the width and height dimensions of the element are in a ratio of from about 1.3:1 to 2.0:1.

27.   (New) An element according to Claim 23 in which the passageways have identical dimensions.

28.   (New) A ceramic packing element having an essentially uniform cross-section along an axis passing through the center of the element and about which the element is symmetrical defining the length of the element and first and second pairs of opposed concave external surfaces which extend along the length of the element at intersections of mutually perpendicular height and width axes, the height and width axes being perpendicular to the length direction, said concave surfaces being connected by surfaces that are selected from convex surfaces and convex surfaces connected to the concave surfaces by relatively short intermediate flat surfaces, and the element being provided with at least three through passages in the length direction, the three passageways being round in cross-section and the diameter of each being less than one half of the

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height of the element, wherein width and height dimensions of the element are unequal.

29.   (New) A ceramic packing element having upper and lower surfaces which define an essentially uniform cross-section along an axis passing through the center of the element and about which the element is symmetrical defining the length of the element and four concave external surfaces which extend along the length of the element where height and width axes meet, the height and width axes being perpendicular to the length direction, said concave surfaces being connected by surfaces that are selected from convex surfaces and convex surfaces connected to the concave surfaces by relatively short intermediate flat surfaces, and the element being provided with a central through hole and at least six additional through holes connecting the upper and lower surfaces, the additional holes being spaced from the central hole to define separate passages through the element, wherein a ratio of the width to the length is from 1.5:1 to 5:1.

30.   (New) A ceramic bed limiter packing element having an essentially uniform cross-section along an axis passing through the center of the element and about which the element is symmetrical defining the length of the element and two opposed first concave external surfaces which extend along the length of the element at opposite ends of a height dimension, and two opposed second concave external surfaces which extend along the length of the element at opposite ends of a width dimension, said concave surfaces being connected by surfaces that are selected from convex surfaces and convex surfaces connected to the concave surfaces by relatively short intermediate flat surfaces, the height and width axes being perpendicular to the length direction, and the element being provided with at least three discrete through passages in the length direction, the through passages being disconnected from each other, wherein the width and height dimensions are unequal.